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MARCH 21, 2025 | VOLUME 16 | ISSUE 7

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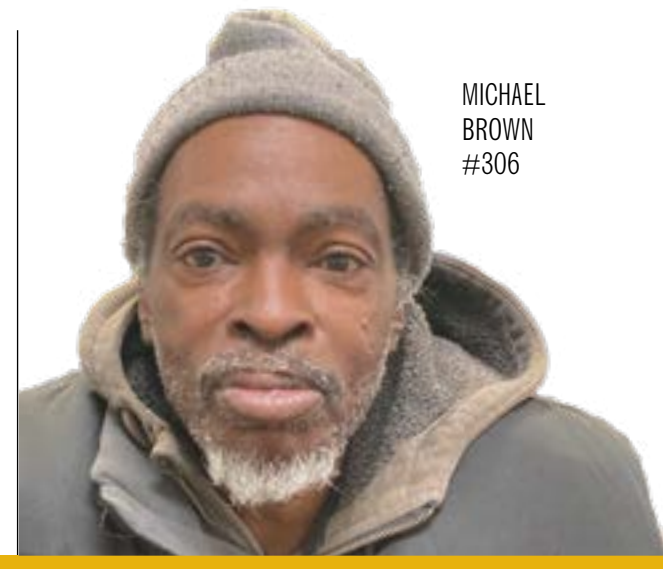
Bipolar disorder and head injuries have made my life a disaster. **page 5**



MICHAEL BROWN #306

ASK YOUR VENDOR: **WHERE IS HOME FOR YOU?**

GROUNDCOVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.

Photo credit: Mike Jones

International Network of Street Papers

- **"Beyond the Bridge: A Solution to Homelessness" comes to the Michigan Theater** page 4
- **Reflection on "Letter to the West Side"** page 8
- **63rd Ann Arbor Film Festival** page 12

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@groundcovernews, include vendor name and vendor #

Response to the library lot announcement

ALAN HABER
Ann Arbor Community Commons Initiating Committee

While they brought it forward with smiles and promises of a new jewel in the Center of the City, this new Library Lot action is a bad deal and it should be reversed.

First, it was a betrayal of the agreement made in 2023 between the City Council and the Council of the Commons, that the next stage in the implementation of the 2018 vote would be to issue a Request for Proposals seeking "consultants" to evaluate the work done so far by the Center of the City Task Force, the Council of the Commons, community groups and neighbors. Then they would suggest positive next steps forward in developing an urban central park and civic center commons.

This RFP was not written because, we were told, City staff was so busy with bicentennial activities that it had to be delayed. But now, with the cause of the delay past, would not a good faith, honest government write and issue the RFP?

The City Councilmember who arranged the deal between the City Council and Council of the Commons (involving disbanding the Council of the Commons because the question would be in professional hands) was absent when the matter was debated, and no other City Councilmember provided the answer, and my public comment was not heard.

Good faith would reconsider their March 3 meeting action on the Library, and when those two tied-together proposals are back before the Council, one or more members familiar with the Commons development should move a vote to postpone consideration until at least after the consultants' report is requested, received and evaluated.

The City promised $40,000 to join with $70,000 raised by the Library Green Conservancy from individual private donors. When last year the City was discussing what to do with unexpected excess money, I reminded them to include their existing commitment of $40,000 for the consultants' cost. Instead they set up a contingency fund for the possible effects of Trumpism.

They said there was no money for development. This is untrue. The previous City Council provided a development fund from the revenue generated by surface parking until the parking is terminated. The current Administration refuses to account for or release this money. It could be more than $800,000 after maintenance overhead is deducted.

Also, at the beginning there was no need for a lot of money. Those who were trying to activate the space raised what was needed, and improvised the stage and sound and lighting and tables and chairs and benches as best could be done — which was good enough, and getting better with every program. The actual programs have demonstrated the space is very good for open, casual use and also concerts, flea markets, free markets, food and food trucks, art and fun for kids.

Worse than the false assertions of under-utilized and unfunded, the City disrespected the vote itself. "Let the people vote — but the government will do what it wants;" this is what I have called "totalitarian democracy." They call the Library Lane Lot "an under-utilized site." The fact is the current City Administration has refused to allow any motion in the implementation of the People's Vote. They have refused to remove car parking to allow the casual, unprogrammed use of the central park. They have refused to call the neighbors together to activate community involvement, as the City Administrator was directed by the Center of the City Task Force and City

see **COMMONS** page 11 ➡

GROUNDCOVER NEWS

PROVIDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF-DETERMINED INDIVIDUALS IMPACTED BY POVERTY, **PRODUCING A STREET NEWSPAPER** THAT GIVES A PLATFORM TO UNDERREPRESENTED VOICES IN WASHTENAW COUNTY, **PROMOTING AN ACTION** TO BUILD A JUST, CARING AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY.

Groundcover News, a 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in April 2010 as a means to empower low-income persons to make the transitions from homeless to housed, and from jobless to employed.

Vendors purchase each copy of our regular editions of Groundcover News at our office for 50 cents. This money goes towards production costs. Vendors work selling the paper on the street for $2, keeping all income and tips from each sale.

Street papers like Groundcover News exist in cities all over the United States, as well as in more than 40 other countries, in an effort to raise awareness of the plight of homeless people and combat the increase in poverty. Our paper is a proud member of the International Network of Street Papers.

STAFF

Lindsay Calka — *publisher*

Cynthia Price — *editor*

Michelle Lardie-Guzek — *intern*

ISSUE CONTRIBUTORS

Anonymous
Elizabeth Bauman
Dezz Clark
Jim Clark
La Shawn Courtwright
Stephanie Duncan
Alan Haber
Jonathan Glass
Mike Jones
Denise Shearer
Tommy Spaghetti
Steven

PROOFREADERS
Susan Beckett
Elliot Cubit
Zach Dortzbach
Matthew Rohlman
Steve Ross
Anabel Sicko
Allison Wei

VOLUNTEERS
Jane Atkins
Jessi Averill
Sim Bose
Luiza Duarte Caetano
Jacob Fallman
Glenn Gates
Jonathan Glass
Bella Martinez
Robert Klingler
Ari Ruczynski
Jack Weinberg
Mary Wisgerhof
Max Wisgerhof
Melanie Wenzel

CONTACT US

Story and photo submissions:
submissions@groundcovernews.com

Advertising and partnerships:
contact@groundcovernews.com

Office: 423 S. 4th Ave., Ann Arbor
Mon-Sat, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Phone: 734-263-2098
@groundcovernews
@groundcover

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1/8	$110.00	$150.00	5 X 3 or 2.5 X 6.5
1/6	$145.00	$200.00	5 X 4
1/4	$200.00	$265.00	5 X 6.25
1/2	$375.00	$500.00	5 X 13 or 10.25 X 6.5
full page	$650.00	$900.00	10.25 X 13

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Six Months/Twelve Issues: **25%** off
Full Year/Twenty-four Issues: **35%** off
Only run for two weeks/one issue: **40%** off
Additional **20%** discount for money saving coupons

ASK YOUR VENDOR

Where is home for you?

Norfolk, Virginia.
— Michael Brown, #306

My home. In Ann Arbor, Michigan.
— Shelley DeNeve, #22

Wherever I lay my head.
—Tony Schohl, #9

Home is where I hang my hat.
— Cindy Gere, #279

Wherever I don't feel negative vibes. It could be under a tree, in my own little world.
—Terri Demar, #322

Home is a state of mind ... wherever I am comfortable in my mind is home to me.
—Wayne Sparks, #615

My corner, Washington and Main St.
— Roberto Isla Caballero, #347

Ann Arbor!
— Mike Jones, #113

Ypsilanti and in the arms of my people — Jim Clark, #139

Home is where the heart is.
— Eamonn Ofoighill, #531

Here, now. Home is a luxury to me these days.
— Pedro Campos, #652

The real truth about homelessness

DEZZ CLARK
Groundcover vendor No. 643

The truth about homelessness is that people go through things that other people don't pay attention to. How did these people get to this point, where they have nowhere to go, no food to eat? THEIR FAMILY HAS LEFT THEM. Now they have nothing and no one to help them. But you see, we are not different from anyone else, just less fortunate. Once we fall, it's hard to get back up; it takes work — lots of work.

Being human, you understand that we have a job to do, but you have to put in the work to get the job done. I love life, I want better. I need to see if we put in the work to stop the problem of homelessness, we would have a better way of life. We need to go back to the old days where we taught our children how to live for themselves — to know how to live, how to feed their family, how to pay bills, to feed themselves, to be able to receive good news.

But you still try as you might to help those who do want the help, though they'll never know. Why? It's because it takes work to make sure that the ones you care about know that you care.

They are the ones — the ones you know need help because if they don't get it when they need it, when they finally do, it will be too late. We need to make a difference now. We can by giving a person a chance to work, to really have a chance to start a new life. People are not as crazy as we think they are. We need to sit down, talk with them, so we all know that we are family.

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

DENISE SHEARER
Groundcover vendor No. 485

St. Patrick's Day is a very joyful holiday. One of the reasons St. Patrick's Day is a good holiday is because green is one of my favorite colors. St. Patrick's Day is also good because one of my favorite foods is corned beef sandwiches. I like to cook corned beef at home and make sandwiches with Thousand Island dressing. I also like corned beef sandwiches with mayonnaise or mustard.

I remember going to a St. Patrick's Day parade in Detroit. It was back in the 1990s. Me and a couple of friends went together. It was one of the happiest times. It was very joyful, colorful and musical. We ate out at a restaurant in downtown Detroit and I had my favorite corned beef sandwich.

Good things happen during St. Patrick's Day, like the weather gets better. Another reason I like St. Patrick's Day so much is because it is a Christian holiday.

My first day back

TOMMY SPAGHETTI
Groundcover vendor No. 669

Old Ann Arbor ... Remember the old Cloverleaf? Fat Nic? The Cloverleaf was replaced by Dunkin, a national chain. Selling Groundcover from across the street (Federal Building), I see many familiar faces — but not Brian's, Nic's or George's.

The Cloverleaf Restaurant moved to Saline with a new name and a completely different customer base. Nic (aka Fat Nic) passed almost ten years ago and George, Nic's son, finally got out of downtown Ann Arbor.

Brian, the Cloverleaf's most reliable customer, owns a house around the corner on Fifth Avenue (or used to). Brian's house was pretty close to the police station and served as a warm-up center for some of Ann Arbor's indigent population. Brian would allow me to park in the driveway when I came to town. Free parking is like gold downtown. Brian could always be counted on for some poignant witticism.* I wonder where Brian spends his time now that the Cloverleaf has moved to Saline.

"He walked into the restaurant and said, 'George owns this?' Then turned around and walked out. Hasn't been back since." Said George.

New Ann Arbor has grown rapidly in the last eight years since I've been gone. New construction everywhere. Ann Arbor used to be a small town with a big university, now it's a big city with a big university. The streets are still lively during the day, I can tell by selling Groundcover. At night I don't know because I'm in bed by nine or ten o'clock. Bed? I meant to say couch because I couch surfed last night at my friends' house.

Selling Groundover ... It is truly amazing how supportive the local citizens are. I sold almost all of my copies in a relatively short amount of time. Most buyers gave me more than the cover price. I like to engage pedestrians with questions that might garner a sale, knowing that many pedestrians are just trying to walk from one place to another. Knowing that a percentage of customers are in a solipsistic** frame of mind. They don't want any interference from homeless newspaper salespeople.

"Help me to be a winner today and buy my last paper." The young woman turned around to fetch $2 out of her purse. She remarked, "I'm giving you this because I want all of us to be winners." My reply, "Awesome! What's your name?" "I don't just give out my name." "Then what's your number?" Ha Ha, a smile comes out. "I just hope you read the paper." "Of course I'm going to read it." "Well, some people buy this paper merely to support the vendor." "Well, for me, it's both."

Gratitude equals attitude! I'm grateful to the young woman who made me a winner, grateful to Brenna and Ashley for allowing me to shower and sleep on a comfortable couch last night. Thank you to all for another day of breathing. Thank you for the sunshine. Thank you to Glenn for the conversation today. Thank you to whoever bought the coffee at Groundcover. Thank you thank you thank you.

**Witticism = combination of witty and criticism*

***Solipsism = The philosophy theory that the self is the only thing that can be verified.*

"Beyond the Bridge: A Solution to Homelessness" comes to the Michigan Theater

JIM CLARK
Groundcover vendor No. 139

Panelists L to R: Beth Angell, Don Sawyer, Roshanak Mehdipanah, Molly Smith, Jennifer Hall, Mayor Christopher Taylor.

On Tuesday March 11, I attended a viewing of a documentary called "Beyond the Bridge: A Solution to Homelessness." The viewing was very well attended. There was a mix of genders and races, but a large part was composed of white, middle-aged women of apparent means, so mostly homogeneous.

The documentary was directed and produced by Don Sawyer and filmed by Tim Hashko who both previously created a documentary titled "Under the Bridge: The Criminalization of Homelessness," and who both attended the screening. The new documentary is about finding solutions to the problems discovered in the first movie.

Sawyer and Hashko set out on a cross-country trip to visit various large cities in the United States to ascertain how they address their homelessness issues. Of the major cities they visited, two stood out as having the best approach to a solution: Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Houston, Texas. The two cities boast a significant reduction in homelessness from the street to permanent housing. These cities embraced the Housing First model.

Housing First seeks to provide a person with an immediate and permanent place to live before addressing any other barriers such as criminal record, mental health or behavioral issues. Housing First has no mandatory programs or conditions a person must meet before being housed.

Among the first few steps taken by these cities to reduce homelessness and institute Housing First, one was a change in the way law enforcement interacts with those experiencing homelessness and another was the creation of a low-barrier rental network. Amazingly, there are a number of landlords that charge truly affordable rents (comparable to a room in Ypsilanti for $500 a month) and do not charge application fees or conduct background and credit checks. Changes in police work involve officers behaving more like social workers and less like cops. This is especially significant when it comes to warrants. Their police officers who are practicing homelessness "harm reduction" tend to work more closely with county mental health workers, act as points of contact for housing agencies, and can delay or avoid acting on arrest warrants. To the Housing First model they added elements of Permanent Supportive Housing by offering services to help the recently-housed succeed, specifically, the element of supportive services.

Additionally, it was clear that the success of the programs depends on seeing the homeless as people who deserve compassion, kindness and respect.

A very disturbing trend was emphasized by the film. There have always been stigmas about the homeless — mostly the idea that people experiencing homelessness are lazy and are living this way on purpose in order to milk the system. This sentiment is generally only expressed by people who have never been housing or food insecure, do not have debilitating health issues or simply the bad luck of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. They have never had any real tragedy in their lives. These fortunate people have begun to feel okay with things like letting their children jeer and make fun of homeless people, throwing rocks and garbage at them, or the opposite — ghosting them entirely. Worst of all, there have been incidents where homeless people have been murdered; the movie even reported there was a serial killer targeting the homeless at one point. This is decidedly the opposite of compassion, kindness and respect.

Overall, the documentary does a good job pointing out successful efforts by cities that have created movement in solving the homelessness epidemic through lower barriers to housing and services, acknowledging the homeless as people and neighbors deserving of dignity and respect, and most importantly, asking the homeless themselves what they need to exit their situation.

A panel presented after the documentary was moderated by Beth Angell, Dean of the U-M School of Social Work and Ann Arbor Mayor Christopher Taylor. Panelists were Roshanak Mehdipanah, U-M Associate Professor of Public Health; Molly Smith, Director of Services at Avalon Housing; Jennifer Hall, Executive Director of the Ann Arbor Housing Commission; and film director Don Sawyer.

While the Ann Arbor area has taken a number of steps to address the homelessness crisis through its housing commission and organizations like Avalon Housing that provide Permanent Supportive Housing, Sawyer said deeper collaboration is needed between agencies and advocates in order to make a significant impact. To move from transactional interaction to transformative change, Sawyer said, "The first thing that needs to happen is everyone involved has to sit back and they first have to admit failure. The system is not set up to have success.

"Changing that system to a housing and support orientation is key to that transformation," Sawyer said.

In my local experience, cities, townships and county agencies do not communicate. One specific example in Washtenaw County is that Community Mental Health's PATH program places unhoused people in encampments without notifying other units of government. This has resulted in PATH clients being swept by city or township police. Many other inefficiencies like this stand in the way of transformative cooperation locally.

Jim's takeaway: Housing First or radical love?

During the entire event, the question "what causes homelessness in the first place?" was not explored in any depth. There were mentions of a "system that is broken" throughout the film, but that system was treated like a tertiary character in a soap opera. The wolf in sheep's clothing of Housing First is that the "housing" being discussed is usually apartment complexes that often aren't already built. Which means developers are part of the Housing First solution.

Why is this a problem? Because developments, like any other capitalist venture, must make a profit. They must also conform to the desires of the municipalities, both of which add up to higher costs and higher rents. After the paychecks have been signed and the bonuses dispersed, affordable housing all of a sudden isn't affordable anymore.

Further, it's not hard to imagine landlords in bed with developers. The relationship possibly looks like this: the developer builds the apartments and the previously homeless tenants move in with a year-long lease. In subsequent years, the landlords raise the rents beyond what the tenants can pay, the tenants become homeless, the social services systems cry out for "affordable Housing First" units and move all the evicted tenants into them once they are built. Everybody wins but the tenants, right? Moral of the story: you can provide all the rapid rehousing and wraparound support you want, but if the privileged want to raise the cost of your housing and drive you to the street again, they can and they will and there is nothing you can do about it.

Something the documentary misses but shows society is getting close to understanding is that "support services" must go beyond municipal, clinical, "professional" programs. What needs to be explored is how the breakdown of communal bonds such as extended families and identifiable organized supportive communities not only cause homelessness, but keep it intact. At the end of the day what humans need in order to feel connected is the kind of familial love that cannot be provided by governments or institutions.

What is missing is seen in the behavior of parents who let their kids be cruel to random human beings. What's missing is seeing all of humanity as worthy of compassion and love. This is where the real solution lies: radical love. We must do more than change our social services policies — we must change the way we see one another and accept that we have a responsibility to our community. That responsibility goes beyond what support services and professional programs can provide. The responsibility is to establish and nurture a real connection between one another as best as our chemistry and vibe can allow.

Bipolar disorder and head injuries have made my life a disaster

ANONYMOUS

When did it start? Did the mental illness and trouble remembering begin when I fell down my parents' basement steps and my forehead hit the brick wall giving me two black eyes at age six?

Or did it begin when I fell off my bicycle at around age 13 and hit the back of my head on the curb which put a small crack in my skull?

Or did it begin when I fainted in high school in the hallway and smashed my forehead and face into the cement floor giving me two black eyes again?

Also, I once dove into a lake from what we called a jetty (a metal partition they put on the shores of the lake to help break up waves to stop flooding). Anyway when I dove into the water my head hit a rock, one of the many boulders put along the shore to also stop flooding.

It was a miracle of God I came up out of the water with no visible injuries. I have heard of others breaking their necks doing the same thing and becoming paralyzed.

All through grade school and high school I was a slow learner; it was embarrassing. I had trouble concentrating, paying attention, had trouble remembering and as a teenager started having angry outbursts.

At around age 21 (I'm 76 now) I began to work in bars because it was an easy job where I didn't have to use my brain much. After working in the bars a while I became extremely depressed. It was difficult for me to get motivated, which made me late for work most of the time. I lived in an apartment right next door to one of the bars and I was still at least ten minutes late every night. I was very sluggish and didn't know why. Sometimes I laid in bed for weeks.

I never smoked, was not a drinker of alcohol and not a user of drugs. I had so many things wrong with me that I didn't want to make myself worse with substance abuse. However I was addicted to sugar which the Lord delivered me from at around age 35.

Then came more head injuries. Driving home from work at night I fell asleep and hit a telephone pole. Fortunately I had been driving real slow and only shattered my nose and chipped my front tooth.

Another accident I was in happened when trying to cross a very, very busy road from one driveway straight across the road into another driveway. This was just one of my thousands of destructive decisions. I was hit by a Volvo on my driver's side. I woke up to the paramedics trying to get me out of my car. The whole top of my head was very sore for a while.

I have heard of people dying or becoming paralyzed from less severe head injuries than all these. I believe God has saved my life numerous times.

There is one head injury that happened to me at around age 50 that maybe did kill me but the Lord brought me back to life. Here is how it happened: a psychiatrist in South Carolina, who was a really good doctor, prescribed 5 mg of Abilify for me. Then I moved to Columbus, Ohio and went to a government funded medical clinic. The psychiatrist there asked me how I was doing at my check-up. I told him the truth — that I felt great on the 5 mg of Abilify. He then gave me prescriptions for three more pills. He increased the Abilify to 10 mg and added two more pills.

I went back to my government H.U.D. housing, took the three pills and then my brain felt like it was shutting down. I passed out and fell forward and smashed my face on the hard wooden floor. I woke up on my back but it was obvious from my right cheekbone being so swollen that it was blocking my vision, and the fact that the right side of my face was bruised that I obviously fell forward. For about three months I kept asking the Lord how I ended up on my back. The impression I finally got from the Lord is that I fell forward and died but the Lord came down, turned me over and brought me back to life.

I am ashamed and tormented by the fact that I have hurt so many people in my messed up, crazy life. I have over and over hurt my mother who I loved dearly. Mom was my idol but I would lash out at her and others that I loved. I could not control the anger, the hurtful words and doing and saying crazy things.

I was like a big stone rolling over people, and was always moving from place to place. After moving the 30th time I lost count of how many times I moved. I've been in and out of homelessness most of my adult life and presently have been homeless almost nine years.

I grieve, feel sorrow and deeply regret how I have hurt my mother, real father, and my dear sweet stepdad, my brothers (especially my favorite brother) and many others. Wish I could do my life over now that I'm much better and Jesus Christ has helped me to be a better person through His Word in the New Testament.

After that doctor overdosed me, I didn't trust psychiatrists anymore so I asked the Lord what I should do and the impression I got from Him was to stop eating sugar, eat only organic food, take antioxidants, eat an orange everyday, eat pycnogenol (which is rich in antioxidants) and rosemary herb (yuck) and walk 30 minutes every day. The Lord also told me not to eat in fast food restaurants and nothing with potentially toxic ingredients.

My advice to anyone that has depression or any other mental illness is to ask the Lord Jesus Christ to help you and heal you and do not smoke or be in second-hand smoke, never use drugs, don't drink alcohol and don't eat sugar.

There are so many toxins in foods and in the air that we must do our best to avoid as much poison as possible. Also if you should get sick or have a head injury you need to have a healthy brain and body so you can heal quickly. Please, people, take care of yourselves.

What's Happening at the Ann Arbor District Library

Open 10am–8pm Daily
Hang out in any of our five locations across town, browsing books, magazines, newspapers, and more, or check out movies, CDs, art prints, musical instruments, and home tools—you name it! Study and meeting rooms, fast and free WiFi, and plenty of places to sit and hang out

Unusual Stuff to Borrow
There's more to borrow at AADL than books, music, and movies. To name a few, there are games, telescopes, stories-to-go kits, and home tools. Check out these unusual yet handy items during your next library visit.

Fifth Avenue Press
AADL founded Fifth Avenue Press in 2017 to support the local writing community and promote the creation of original content. The imprint publishes works by authors who live in Washtenaw County. Consider submitting your finished manuscript to Fifth Avenue Press today at fifthave.aadl.org.

FEATURED EVENT

Saturday, April 12 • 11am–5pm
Downtown Library
Stop by the Downtown Library for a pop-up record fair with vendors selling used records and gear! We'll have DJs spinning tunes while you check out the vendors and add a vinyl–or two–to your collection. Visit aadl.org/recordstoreday for more!

Mental health, domestic violence, addiction and me

STEPHANIE DUNCAN
Groundcover vendor No. 66

In 2016 I was arrested for domestic violence and assault on a police officer. Because I had been repeatedly calling Community Mental Health, the suicide hotline and 911, I was only charged with a high misdemeanor instead of a felony.

Family and friends rejected helping me. Needless to say, I was unable to return home. I was devastated. Me, homeless? No! Way!! I walked the streets looking for what to do; I needed a job. Looking and watching people panhandle, I didn't want to do that, but I thought that with my eighth grade education I couldn't get a job.

That's when a man — a late, great man — Hal Klenk approached me and said "I can see you are struggling, is there something you are looking for? Maybe I can help you find something."

As I explained to him what was going on, he said, "This is Groundcover News, a street newspaper that I sell, would you like to read it?" I said yes and as we sat in Library Plaza and read a few articles. He then asked if I would like to try and sell them; it was the first time I felt a man not wanting something in return.

I said yes so he took me to the Groundcover News office and I started selling; I quickly got the courage to talk and meet people who had no ulterior motive. I got the courage to apply at Subway and quickly got a job and moved to management. And that's where I met Shelley DeNeve, Groundcover vendor No. 22. As we worked side by side I developed a great relationship with her as well. I was able to get a place within three months. I didn't sell as much but between that and what I made at Subway I started to get on my feet; I focused on seeing my children.

Fast forward to summer 2017, I had my first visit alone with my seven-year-old daughter. Not having much money and wanting her to have a good time, I went to the Groundcover office again and asked if there was any way I could take my daughter with me, because she was so determined to see what I do in my spare time. They quickly said yes and gave her her own badge (No. 66.5); we went and got matching Groundcover yellow t-shirts from Elmo's and she smiled from ear to ear. (Something I wasn't able to give her in a very long time.)

Hal suggested selling at the State Theater where movies were extremely cheap. After making more than enough I asked her what she wanted to go and eat. She said, "Mom, this money is supposed to go to the homeless!" She wanted to pick a homeless person and give her money to them. So I explained what Groundcover was about and that the money was for us. After we went to the movies, she was ready to eat. She asked, "Where do you eat when you're here?" I told her Subway when I'm working, and the Delonis Center when I'm not, and her curious mind wanted to know what the Delonis Center was. So I took her there for dinner.

She was so excited to learn about the community and see that there are men, women, and even families there. At dinner she befriended a little baby and after asked the mom if he could play with her, so we invited the family to Pinball Pete's and they agreed. It was such a blessing to see her and him being children and having so much fun — my heart filled with joy.

I would like to make it known, to this day, every Christmas my daughter will cook extra, and make plates and drive around looking for someone to feed. A blessing from Groundcover News.

I returned to Groundcover News in 2022 after suffering an unimaginable beating and three reconstructive surgeries. I returned to Groundcover, where I felt as though I mattered, and once again I was able to quickly get on my feet. Although I had spent three years getting reconstructive surgery, going to every court date, I was not allowed to speak and my assailant only received two years because he had a plea deal. I was so outraged! What is wrong with the SYSTEM?!

This brought a lot of memories of my mother being abused and the system returning us to our father, so the abuse would continue, as long as he took parenting classes. My mother returned to save her children, or so she thought.

Suffering from P.T.S.D. and not taking the medication I needed, I returned to alcohol, and my drug use really kicked in. After several attempts to end my life, time in jails and other institutions, I went back to Community Mental Health and started taking my medications and following through with my appointments. I finally took a stand and fired my doctor, and after that I was assigned a health care case manager who has fought for me harder than anyone ever has! And I have had a lot. I was also assigned the best psychiatrist I could imagine!

In the summer of 2024, I was finally taking care of my medical conditions and I was diagnosed with cervical cancer — two cancer polyps and four precancerous polyps. I was scheduled for surgery in July but I caught COVID and was required to stay quarantined for 21 days. I couldn't return to my residence because people worked directly in the healthcare industry. So I was blessed by the church and the hospital and was granted to stay in the McAuley Inn for that time. Two days later I had my surgery and things did not go as planned. My one and a half hour surgery turned into six hours in which they accidentally clipped my colon, and had to give me a full hysterectomy. So that led to eight weeks of recovery.

Three weeks later I caught an infection in the area where they had made their mistake, leading to more surgery to have it repaired. I was told I would have to follow up with a gastric specialist; I had Molina insurance at that time, but when I returned home from the hospital, they no longer existed, so the state automatically assigned HAP insurance. There I was, calling the state to get my insurance changed and they tell me I can't but once a year. I explained my situation, called my caseworker, and had to file an emergency appeal.

I'm still awaiting an answer so I can get the medical help I still need. It is extremely painful every moment of my days. Needless to say, I lost my place of residence and needed emergency money so I could put my things in storage. I returned to Groundcover knowing that I could and would be able to work when I felt okay enough, sit when I needed to, and not worry about getting fired. I recently got denied my third time for Social Security Disability after having been a mental health client for 26 years. "The System," after all this, released my assailant and placed him directly across from where I resided. I contacted the parole board and they tod me it's my obligation to follow up with them. I asked for my PPO to be reinstated. They told me I have to pay $250 to renew. What a System!

I am currently residing at a residential treatment program in Ypsilanti, desperately working on my recovery program, waiting on THE SYSTEM. My mental health is being addressed but I'm still waiting on medical attention that is so desperately needed. Thank you Groundcover. And more importantly, thank you to our readers!

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Monique Caldwell's pursuit of happiness

JONATHAN GLASS
Groundcover contributor

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are the rights allotted to all Americans in the Declaration of Independence. No matter how many times you've fallen down, you have the right to pursue happiness. It's never easy for any of us — if it was easy, it wouldn't make us happy. Monique Caldwell has had her share of difficulty in her pursuit of the American dream.

Although she's currently among the unhoused in Ann Arbor, she has chosen to go back to school between Jackson and Washtenaw Community Colleges to complete her higher education degree in addiction studies and mental health. She will be getting an associate of general studies along with advanced certification.

Her life is difficult by any standard, but she is not giving up the fight. Her positivity concerning her difficulties is inspiring. With her small circle of allies, and her devoted husband Sean, Caldwell is taking life by the horns. The path to success isn't a straight line for anyone; it's an up-and-down, loop-to-loop roller coaster that slowly gets better over time. This is Caldwell's recovery story.

It was the beginning of the opioid epidemic and Caldwell had just given birth to her second child by C-section. She was in all respects middle class. Caldwell owned a home and a couple cars, she was working at Maxey Boys Training School as a nurse, money was in the bank and she had two beautiful children. For a moment in time, they had achieved happiness. Then life threw Caldwell a curveball.

The C-section left her in tremendous pain. Doctors were a lot more relaxed about prescribing opioids in the early 2000s. She was over-prescribed opioids until they did nothing to stop the pain whatsoever. Her husband at the time had a hidden heroin habit. He offered her heroin to sniff and it took away the pain. That lasted for a little while. But when sniffing didn't take care of the pain, she started injecting it. Caldwell's story has been the story of thousands of hard-working men and women trapped in a cycle of opioid abuse. Their only crime was a bodily injury which led to a real "Sophie's choice" — endure crippling pain or a life of addiction.

Shortly after Caldwell started using heroin, her husband lost his job and they lost their home. Caldwell said, " I still kick myself for letting that all happen. It's not like I grew up in a bubble. I knew that heroin was a bad drug. But please don't judge anyone for having a use disorder because you don't know their story. I'm a very private person. I don't necessarily want my story published in a newspaper. But addiction stigma has to go! I'm sharing my story to show that addiction doesn't care if you're rich, poor or in the middle — it's a monster that wants to kill as many people as it can. And if it got me, it can get anyone. I never thought for one second I would fall prey to heroin, not for a single moment."

Shortly after losing their home, her husband began stealing copper and just about any metal that was worth money. He also robbed an employee he had worked with previously as she made the nightly deposit at the bank. He was sentenced to prison and left Caldwell alone with two kids and a horrible habit.

In 2011, Caldwell ended up being able to stay with a relative. She did have an active warrant and her family called and turned her in. Later that same day her family had gone through her purse and found four bundles of heroin and called the police to turn it in. Caldwell ended up going in front of Judge Shelton and he wanted to send her to prison for manufacturing and delivery because of the way it was packaged.

"I begged Judge Shelton not to do that because I needed help," she recalled. "I had asked for help a couple years before but nobody in my family cared. I told him, 'I'm an addict, please send me to treatment.'"

Judge Shelton ended up sentencing Monique to one year at Washtenaw County Jail with two years of felony probation. He basically said, "Sure, you can go to treatment from jail as soon as you pay fines and costs of $1,800."

It was impossible to pay once she was in jail. Nobody in her family would help.

"I was completely alone. Everyone turned their backs on me."

What separates Caldwell from others is her work ethic, servant's heart and brilliant knack for turning lemons into lemonade. She could have sat in the jail cell and stared at the wall, but she became a trustee, helping others on her block and the officers throughout the jail. Caldwell also took every group that the jail had to offer such as Moral Reconation Therapy and Dual Diagnosis. She started CMH and was diagnosed with bipolar, borderline personality disorder, Opiod Substance Use Disorder, extreme anxiety disorder and PTSD. "I finally got the help that I needed to start going through all the trauma I had suffered since I was a child.

"I wrote Judge Shelton a five page letter first telling him how angry I was and thought he was a complete jerk, but then thanked him because he saved my life. I sent all my completed certificates, 12 in all, and told him all the things that I had started to learn about myself, and he ended up calling the jail personally and told them to release me that day, two months earlier than I was to be released."

The first thing Caldwell did was get in contact with her children. She began visits with her son but they were few and far between. It was apparent that Caldwell needed to get a job and apartment to be able to get her kids back from relatives.

Caldwell said, "The road to getting my kids back was full of obstacles, and to be honest, it's still a sensitive subject. I can't go into it." In the end, Caldwell let her kids stay with the family members, not wanting to cause any more trauma to them. Her kids turned out extremely well. Her daughter graduated at 16 and then started college right away. Her son also is doing very well. They're both in their early twenties now.

In 2016, Caldwell lost her spot at Delonis, and she ended up buying what she thought was heroin but it turned out to be carfentanil and she overdosed, almost fatally. She said, "I hated myself, but I started methadone and therapy. Methadone wasn't the answer so I switched to Suboxone and that has done the trick to keep me sober. Another chance."

She was in a new relationship and she realized she was pregnant with her now-husband Sean's baby, their first and only baby together. Shortly thereafter, he was sentenced to prison, and they decided to give their daughter, Eve, up for adoption.

Caldwell said, "It's the hardest thing I've ever had to do, but I did my research and found a beautiful couple in Ohio who couldn't have children of their own, and they adopted our daughter. They were the perfect candidates. Let me qualify that by saying I had nothing to offer her at the time. The most selfless act I could do was to give Eve to a couple of young professionals who could make her dreams come true. The mom was a teacher, the husband was an architect. I'm heartsick over it to this day. Sean and I still couldn't even talk about her for a long time, but we do celebrate her birthday. It wasn't done lightly."

Caldwell mentioned that she hasn't known love like the love of her husband Sean. "We've had more than our

see **MONIQUE** page 11 ➡

Reflection on the "Letter to the West Side"

MIKE JONES
Groundcover vendor No. 113

"A Letter to the West Side" had two showings, February 8 and February 26, 2025, at the Michigan Theater in Ann Arbor, and at both showings there was a full house. I attended the second showing, and was very impressed by the production of the documentary.

"A Letter to the West Side" is a personal visual account of the once-vibrant Black neighborhood located in Ann Arbor.

I grew up on the westside. I wrote an article in Groundcover News November, 1, 2022 (Volume 13, Issue 21), titled "Gentrification of Ann Arbor, my hometown, through the eyes of Shanty Wobagege aka Mike Jones." To read it, visit the Groundcover News website and go to the archive section.

"A Letter to the West Side" is a glimpse into the history of Ann Arbor — history that people who live, work and play in this small town don't know about. I often talk to Groundcover News customers and Ann Arbor residents who don't know the history of the westside. Just like the United States, Ann Arbor is now home to people from all over the world.

This documentary started at the roots. The Underground Railroad and the Great Migration where millions of Black people moved from the South to the North in search of a better life. My granddad, James Y. Jones, migrated from Jones County, Mississippi to Ann Arbor along with Ann Arbor notables Mr. Delong of Delong's BBQ and Rosey of Rosey Barber Shop.

This showing also explained the difference between segregation in the south which was implemented through law, and in the north where segregation was an unwritten law. One example of this was how white landowners would not sell homes to Blacks outside of the westside area in Ann Arbor.

The documentary then moved into explaining the gentrification of this once thriving Black community. Gentrification in Ann Arbor took place 30 to 40 years ago. The movie conveyed how this gentrification actually took place.

I was so happy to learn things I didn't know about in the neighborhood I grew up in. Like the history of the Dunbar Center that would become the Ann Arbor Community Center where I used to play along with my childhood friends as a young lad.

Mainly, what I got out of this wonderful documentary is what I experienced as a child growing up in a loving and nurturing environment; visiting other Black families and businesses, while also having friends of different backgrounds other than my own race who I consider family. A community where everybody knew one another and looked out for one another. The most meaningful time in my life was in that beautiful neighborhood called the westside.

Jones in front of the mural on 4th and Catherine on the Westside.

I was greatly surprised by the massive turnout to the showing, and I got to see a lot of people I haven't seen in a long time from the westside neighborhood. The audience was in full support of the experience, expression and the direction of this well-produced informative documentary by Breyko, in partnership with the Ann Arbor Housing Commission.

Overall, I believe this documentary covered all the bases, and I myself was a student of my own history. It's a great feeling knowing I was a part of history with so much culture, pride and togetherness in a beautiful community and neighborhood in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

I hope documentaries such as "A Letter to the West Side" will help bring awareness to prevent future neighborhoods being gentrified. I also hope we as the human race can learn to live together in peace without worry of what race, color or creed a person might be. We are all one race, the Human Race. We are One!

WINTER PROGRAM INFORMATION
DAY TIME WARMING SHELTER LOCATIONS:

Location	Address	Dates Available
Ypsilanti Freighthouse (Mon.- Thur., 8am-6pm)	100 Market Place Ypsilanti, MI 48198	Nov. 13, 2024 - March 31, 2025
Delonis Center (Weekends only)	312 W. Huron St. Ann Arbor, MI 48103	Nov. 11, 2024 - April 13, 2025
First Baptist Church (8am-4pm)	517 E. Washington St. Ann Arbor, MI 48104	Feb. 17, 2025 - March 14, 2025
Ann Arbor Friends Meeting (8am - 4pm)	1420 Hill St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104	March 14, 2025 - March 28, 2025

All Washtenaw County office building lobbies are available as warming center sites during normal business hours.

Unless otherwise specified, all above warming shelters operate Monday through Friday during normal business hours. If you have any questions or need more information, please contact the Delonis Center at **734-662-2829**. For updates, visit **bit.ly/washtenaw-warming**.

For updates and more information: bit.ly/washtenaw-warming

OVERNIGHT SHELTER INFORMATION

Winter shelter information: Winter daytime and overnight shelter accommodations are available throughout the winter shelter season from **November 11, 2024 - April 13, 2025** for any individual seeking emergency shelter during the cold winter months.

- **Daytime shelter** - Monday - Thursday, 8am - 6pm at the Ypsilanti Freighthouse (100 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198)
- **Overnight shelter** - Nighttime accommodations are at the Delonis Center; 312 W. Huron St., Ann Arbor, and at offsite locations including Congregation partners throughout the County, and there is an overnight shelter in Ypsilanti. During day-time hours, those seeking overnight shelter should first contact HAWC to obtain a referral for shelter at 734-961-1999. If it is after 5pm or weekend, please come to the Delonis Center or call the Delonis Center at 734-662-2829 and we'll assist with ensuring you're served and provide transportation to an offsite location if needed.

How do I get into the shelter?
Any individuals seeking emergency shelter please contact Housing Access of Washtenaw County (HAWC) at 734-961-1999 to obtain a referral to the Delonis Center. If it is after 5pm or weekend, please come to the Delonis Center and we'll assist ensuring you're served. Families, please come to or call Alpha House for assistance anytime at 734-822-0220.

What is provided at the shelter?
Individuals are provided a safe place to sleep each night and can access a wide variety of services including meals, case management, medical care, and most importantly help finding permanent housing.

Last updated: 3/5/25

Sudoku ★★★★☆☆ 4puz.com

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Groundcover Vendor Code

While Groundcover is a non-profit, and paper vendors are self-employed contractors, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

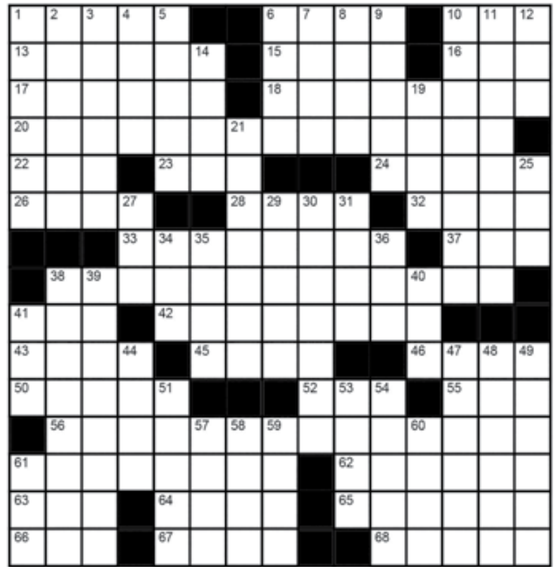
The following is our **Vendor Code of Conduct**, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

- Groundcover will be distributed for a voluntary donation. I agree not to ask for more than the cover price or solicit donations by any other means.
- When selling Groundcover, I will always have the current biweekly issue of Groundcover available for customer purchase.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper or selling an issue more than 4 weeks old.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers and refrain from wearing it or other Groundcover gear when engaged in other activities.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from other vendors who have been suspended or terminated.
- I agree to treat all customers, staff, and other vendors respectfully. I will not "hard sell," threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover.
- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor in downtown areas. I will also abide by the Vendor Corner Policy.
- I understand that Groundcover strives to be a paper that covers topics of homelessness and poverty while providing sources of income for the homeless. I will try to help in this effort and spread the word.

If you would like to report a violation of the Vendor Code or leave positive review of a Vendor experience please email contact@groundcovernews.com or fill out the contact form on our website.

CROSSWORD

International Network of Street Papers



ACROSS

1. Fishing boat used in the developing world
6. Apple variety
10. "Be quiet!"
13. Went to a restaurant
15. 100 dinars
16. Ring bearer, maybe
17. Nine-day prayer ritual
18. Seconds
20. Home with close neighbors
22. ___-Atlantic
23. 007, for one
24. Leaf opening
26. Fancy smoothie flavor
28. Icelandic epic
32. Face-to-face exam
33. Fattest
37. "Rocky ___"
38. Heart-lifting
41. African antelope
42. Pre-metallurgic era
43. All ___
45. Kind of song
46. Surfing need
50. Banana oil, e.g.
52. Athletic supporter?
55. "Andy Capp" cartoonist Smythe
56. Material inside bodily organs
61. Lyrics projected at the opera
62. Flower commonly called candytuft
63. "Rocks"
64. Golden Triangle country
65. Blue-pencil
66. High degree
67. The Beatles' "___ Leaving Home"
68. Cherishes

DOWN

1. Canal site
2. On the skin
3. Silver state
4. Attendee
5. Some wedding guests
6. Beam
7. "___ it the truth!"
8. Punishment for a sailor, maybe
9. Lower women
10. "Land of senses"
11. What trolls send
12. "48___"
14. Pack (down)
19. Ford, for one
21. It can be quizzical
25. "Aladdin" prince
27. "___ alive!"
29. 1957 #1 song
30. Pause in hostilities
31. ___ Minor
34. Bull markets
35. Bridle parts
36. Deck (out)
38. To the extent that
39. Raised
40. "What's ___?"
41. "Fancy that!"
44. The Amish, e.g.
47. Ancient debarkation point
48. "The Merchant of ___"
49. Gets rid of
51. Stirs
53. Arabic for "commander"
54. Fell off
57. Its motto is "Industry"
58. ___ gin fizz
59. Bungle, with "up"
60. Change
61. Bit of a draft

Travels with Dreamer, part 2

STEVEN
Groundcover vendor No. 668

Editor's Note: This article is a continuation of "Travels with Dreamer: The Girl in the Shiny Green Dress," Groundcover News, March 7, 2025, page 10.

Where do you stay when you're a dumb kid with almost no money, new to New Orleans, around Halloween? Did I mention The Squat? I did crash at it a handful of times. The Squat was downright scary though. I only laid there when I lost track of time and partied too late.

Where I mostly crashed was across the river in Algiers. Algiers is a different town than New Orleans as I understood it. It's not a neighborhood. What did I know? There was a free ferry that didn't run super late, like 10 or 11. It was a different world. I don't remember exploring Algiers. It wasn't really remarkable to me other than that's where they made the Mardi Gras floats.

Just off the ferry just past the levy off to the right was a pretty dense clump (stand? grove? copse?) of trees. I was never bothered there and stashed my backpack there. Which worked great — 'till it didn't. That's where it all fell apart. I, in my inexperience, stashed my stuff, intake. Normal travel stuff. A Star Trek novel, about four cigarette lighters, some pairs of jockey shorts and socks, a few t-shirts, a pair of shorts (jams), a pair of pants, cool rocks from the railroad tracks, a half-dozen narrow-ruled lined paper notebooks. I was carrying rocks not geodes or crystals or fossils. Just rocks I thought looked neat. Priorities right? Not even good skippers. My bag all spread out over the whole lobby. I was so nervous I forgot I had a little-used metal weed pipe, which was not discovered, in the left inside breast pocket of my sick ass tight red leather 70s jacket until we were hitching down the road three days later.

Traveling lightly meant the one bag was packed to the gills. Had I added a wafer thin mint it would have busted a seam. It was loaded with a wide range of things a 19-year-old dude thought important. The police in Florida unpacked it when they pulled Dreamer and me off the freight train, and they spread it all over the floor for my or drug testing or whatever but I didn't go that way. Too bad.

Kind of heavy and unwieldy, not the kind of load you want to lug up and down the dense biomass of Bourbon Street while the party is on. I stashed my bag. Like a fool I stashed it very, very poorly. There were people partying where I stashed it and I just shoved it under a bush and called it good. I popped across the river. I loved the ferry anyway, it's in my blood. My grandpa on my dad's side skippered all sorts of craft on The Great Lakes over the years. Boat captain was a path I deeply considered then foolishly discarded. I think it was too much school

I don't remember what I was getting on this ferry trip but it doesn't matter, the bag was gone. Immediately I'm defeated. My entire adventure ended in that moment: a consequence of youth, well, let's call it immaturity. My propensity to quit something if it gets hard or even inconvenient rushed screaming to front and center. I can see the scene there in the trees: the Mighty Mississippi muttering along as it has for millennia. I might have cried, it would be totally on brand. I dragged my shuffling feet slowly back to the ferry and back to the Quarter. Not sure how the night went after that. I'm sure I was sad bastard style all night. I have no clear memory until the next day.

I'm all about Jungian synchronicity, and it seems the way things played out would be a perfect example of it. I remember sitting on the lowest step being consoled by Dreamer and The Girl. I was beside-myself distraught. This was all my stuff. Stuff I wanted. Stuff I thought I needed. Hell I packed it and dragged it across Michigan, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, the Florida panhandle, Alabama, Mississippi into Louisiana.

Out of nowhere a black van pulls up in front of us. We three stared slack-jawed as this charismatic dude jumps out the side door leaving a handful of people inside. He addresses the lightly populated Stairs asking if anyone wants to help dumpster dive and sponge their way in the van to Michigan?

Crazy, right? My world has just collapsed; I'm convinced just moments before my trip is over. I'm bemoaning what to do next and Bam! this ride all the way home or near enough falls into my lap. I mean, shit, WTF? Sure seems like synchronicity right? Like what kind of crazy coincidence is that? Without a second thought I piped up. "OK, grab what you need and let's go," he says. My stupid stupid stooopid brain flipped a switch. I'm headed home. New Orleans, anything and everything to do with it are in my rear view before I even get in the van.

I've done some shameful things over the years. I like to think no more than most people. You fold in the drinking, crazy drugs, crazier friends, mental illness, and a singular selfishness it's fair to say I've gone beyond my allotment. All of which of course cause a profound shame within me. This one is in the top 10.

A second ago I thought I was totally screwed, now I'm stoked. Now falling in my lap is the perfect solution, I thought. These guys were driving straight through to southern Michigan. They were clear that this trip would be of an indeterminate length as we would need to stop often to panhandle gas money and dumpster dive food. I'm like "Whatever man, let's go."

I turn to The Girl glibly happy at my good fortune. Smiling like an idiot, absolutely clueless to any other part of the situation beyond "ride home good," like I discovered fire. Well, of course she's crying. This surprises me. Immaturity, selfishness, cluelessness, stupidity and a touch of cruelty take the cake, frosted with (undiagnosed, untreated) bipolar with, I suspect, sprinkles of an occult element. Or even, and this isn't like me, a desire from without myself. Well she's sobbing, ugly crying before I knew to call it that. Beside herself.

From what I'd heard, an ancient Greek would have thought her uterus was about to malfunction. But to her absolute credit The Girl kept it together — amazing. She's been completely blindsided by this. We were so deep into each other, into the scene, the whole thing was awesome. What the f*ck is going on? What the actual f*ck?

I enveloped her in my long neanderthal arms, pulled her to me, held her tight for several beats, pulled back, looked into her face, kissed her tenderly and slowly, got on the van, the door closed.

I never saw her again.

Transforming to Light

LA SHAWN COURTWRIGHT
Groundcover writer

Fertile soil for the planting of an array of new seed
Frozen-solid ground to purify the soil
To get out all of the unclean elements in the soil as it survived,
had endured the severe cold
Now see the elegant, glorious plants, the flowers of Her fertile soil
The transformation of the seeds to a glorious new creation
Thank GOD Almighty!!!!!!

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MARCH 2025 EVENTS AT BETHLEHEM
Please visit the church website at:
www.bethlehem-ucc.org
for the most up-to-date calendar and event information.
Jesus didn't turn people away. Neither Do We. United Church of Christ
Sunday Worship Time
10:00 am In-person
and via Live Stream

➡ **COMMONS** from page 2

Council accepting those recommendations. They have refused to share storage space to help community events when they are programmed. They have certainly not volunteered any City park material, equipment or help in activation.

And for the last year and more, they have refused to write a Request for Proposals to seek professional help, as agreed with the Council of the Commons. Now they spend City money and time to formulate a new plan, to annul the old vote and build a new library and many floors of market rate and affordable housing to pay for it without asking the people for taxes.

The Library has been wanting a new building for a long time; they proposed a millage in 2012 to pay for it, but were defeated. They got a new idea of rebuilding themselves as a "mixed use" building in their existing space with another several floors of public library and on top of that 12 or 15 floors of housing, the equity value of which would pay for or facilitate financing of the new Library.

I met with the AADL Director to explore how the new library could interface with a new Civic Center Building, envisioned over Library Lane and connecting with the Library. Rather than being kept in the loop on developments, which was the understanding I thought we had, eye to eye, the next thing I heard of was this done-deal going to the City Council to give the Library Lane Lot to the Library for housing development and Library expansion, and terminate the commons, and void the vote.

Besides that there is no integrity in this deal: ignoring standing commitments, it is deceptive in its imagined benefits. When the commons was on the ballot, the "housing first" people argued, "Let the profiteers build their fancy housing, they will have to give a share of the benefit to the affordable housing fund." So affordable housing was a benefit of the big build, though such housing would not be in the Center of the City.

In this new deal, affordable housing gets little of the benefit, maybe a few units, but the vast bulk of the benefit is going to support financing needed for the new library. We have not been told the particulars of how this "no tax" plan works.

Why has their mixed-use plan promoted in November expanded in February to take the whole surface? The Library did not say.

One could conclude that the numbers for private housing over their current space did not yield enough equity to pay for the new library so they needed a larger footprint … so take the commons space too — which they never liked anyway — and promise the people a jewel of a new Library and housing complex with stores and programmable public space. Nowhere to be seen are the words "park" or "commons" or "user participation" in the development, or even "green."

Last time the question came to a vote, the people chose to have a central park and green space and not a big, big building. I expect the people would choose so again.

Their current proposal has no pictures, no numbers, no details, no oversight, only the gittering promise of a jewel with many imagined facets.

This Library proposal should go back to the drawing boards for detailing. The Commons should continue to the consultants and last Monday's action should be called back, reconsidered and postponed until after the consultant's report, if then.

It is sad when the AADL director speaks of the civic vision the community has been developing for decades and refuses to look at the actual planning and drawings that people have developed for looking forward.

It would also show good faith, however belatedly, for the City Council to invite a presentation of the ideas people have developed on the Central Park development and Civic Center Building plan and commons process. The Ann Arbor Community Commons Initiating Committee could do this; it is recognized and empowered by the City Council to develop community participation in the Center of the City development. Beautiful ideas and pictures, welcoming to everyone, would be good to show. Beauty and good design is what will draw the private money and generosity of Ann Arbor to build what is envisioned.

The negativity of the City Administration and the Library does not help, but it might draw forth a fairer assessment of the Commons development. Such an assessment is what the City Council should offer the public, not a sleight of hand, bait and switch, disappearance and cancellation of the Central Park, Civic Center Building and the community Commons good for everyone.

Resist, Push Back. This was a bad deal that the City Council passed. Just say No!

Read more about the Ann Arbor Commons Initiating Committee at AnnArborCommunityCommons.org

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➡ **MONIQUE** from page 7

share of problems," she said. "But we put the work in. He is my best friend, he's been by my side and loves me, for me. He knows everything. For the past decade, Sean, Sheri and Bridget have been my support group."

Caldwell met Sheri Wander at the Daytime Warming Center when Sheri was unhoused. Since then, Sheri and her husband Pat have gotten themselves established with a home, Peace House, and Caldwell volunteered to help out. They're still doing as much outreach in the community as they can.

Caldwell said, "I volunteer as much as I can because service is one of the few things I can do to help the community that makes me feel good and useful."

In 2023, Caldwell's doctors found a tumor during a mammogram. Caldwell recalled, "The radiologist was telling me results, but my ears were ringing, like I couldn't hear a word she said. When I walked out of the hospital and felt the fresh air, I passed out. A guy was like, 'Are you OK?' and I was like, 'I think I'm going to die.'" As this article is being written, Caldwell is still following up on her tumor and is talking about how to go about removing them to see if chemotherapy is really necessary. Keep her in your prayers.

Prior to finding the tumor in her breast, Caldwell's husband Sean had encouraged her to go back to school at WCC. After paying all the school's fines from back in 2007, she was making progress toward her degree. But the cocktail of school stress, working overnights, life stress and facing a deadly disease was more than a strong woman like Caldwell could bear. She said, "I was like f*** it! I'm getting high," and went on a binge for a couple weeks before coming back to herself and getting sober again. In the meantime, she dropped her course load.

Caldwell has seized another opportunity to return to college, this time a fresh start at Jackson Community College that offers on-site living for students, thereby offering her a place to call home. Caldwell remains optimistic, despite all that has happened. Her husband Sean is awaiting his day in court; he's being held in jail in the meantime. Caldwell said, "I miss my best friend. That leaves me alone and sad. I cry a lot."

Caldwell's journey has been a difficult one, but she is a living breathing work in progress who said, "I'm a survivor, not a victim."

Caldwell volunteers with Lindsay Calka, director of Groundcover News, at Weather Amnesty at Purple House on Sundays; volunteers at the warming centers in Ypsilanti and Ann Arbor; and has run a women's support group, all while being unhoused herself. Caldwell said, "Getting my mind off of me and my situation is the only way for me to remain sober. I have to be busy helping others."

Asked about the future, Caldwell said she's looking forward to focusing on education, a career in social work, addiction and mental health, while reconnecting with her adult children and living her best life with Sean.

"I don't know what the future holds," she said. "It may never be perfect, but I keep working to be the best version of myself. I wake up every day and choose to fight for my life by doing good and not letting a hard situation beat me. At the end of the day, I'm only responsible for my reaction, not the things that happened to me. Have I made mistakes? You bet. No one wins every hand. But I've learned so much from my mistakes! And when I become a social worker, I'm going to be so good at my job."

White bean and greens soup

ELIZABETH BAUMAN
Groundcover contributor

Ingredients:
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 sweet onion, diced
1 cup diced carrots
1 cup diced celery
6 garlic cloves, minced
Kosher salt and pepper
1 parmesan rind
3 (14 ounce) cans white beans, drained and rinsed
6 cups vegetable broth
1 bunch kale, wash and torn from the stems, coarsely chopped •
6 ounces fresh baby spinach
Parmesan cheese block (keep rind)
Crushed red pepper

Directions:

Heat the olive oil in a large stock pot over medium heat. Add the onions, carrots, celery and garlic with a few big pinches of salt and pepper. Stir and cook, until the veggies soften (about six minutes). Add in the parmesan rind, two cans of the beans, and the broth. Bring the mixture to a boil then reduce it to a simmer. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes.

Coarsely mash the remaining can of beans. After 20 minutes, add in the mashed beans and stir in the kale and spinach; keep on the heat for a few more minutes. Taste and season with more salt and pepper. Remove the rind. Serve with parmesan on top and a bit of crushed red pepper.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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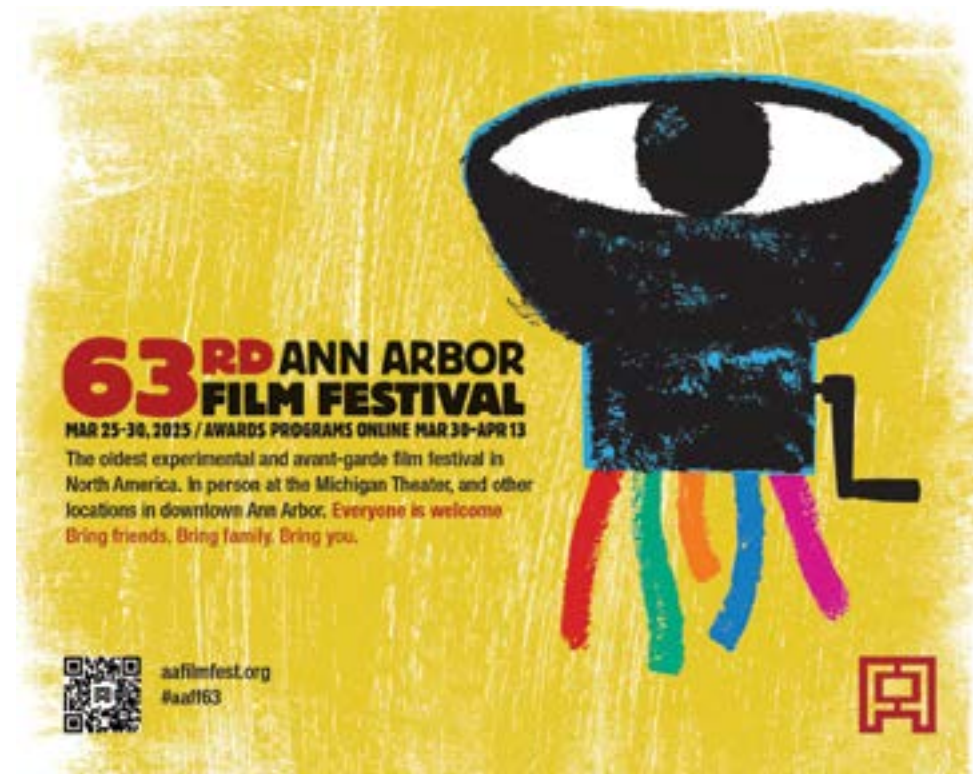
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